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18 October 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Richard N. Perle
Assistant Secretary of Defense
for International Security Policy

SUBJECT : Greek Newspaper To Ethnos: Possible Soviet
Connections

There have been frequent allegations of Soviet penetration of the Greek newspaper Ethnos since it first began publication. Articles in Ethnos consistently adopt an anti-American, pro-Soviet slant, and the paper's owner and publisher has well-known business dealings with Moscow. Evidence of a direct Soviet connection, however, is still largely circumstantial. [redacted]

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1. To Ethnos (literally, The Nation) began publication in 1981. Its slick tabloid format -- which incorporates color photos and extensive coverage of politics, sports, fashion, entertainment, and gossip -- has earned it the position of one of Greece's two top selling newspapers with a circulation of over 100,000. [redacted]

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2. Less than a year after beginning publication, Ethnos became the subject of domestic controversy.

- Based on an item in the London journal "Foreign Report," a rightist Greek newspaper (Messimvrini) alleged that the Soviets had financed the publication of Ethnos with a subsidy of \$1.8 million.
- Subsequently, in Fall 1982 the issue of Soviet penetration of the Greek press became the subject of parliamentary debate, but the results were largely inconclusive. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of European Analysis. 25X1
Questions and comments are welcome and may be addressed to [redacted]
Chief, West European Division, [redacted] 25X1

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3. The matter resurfaced in June 1983 with the publication of the book Take the Nation in Your Hands by Paul Anastasi (also known as Anastasiades), a Cypriot-born journalist who works for the London Daily Telegraph and periodically contributes to the New York Times. In the book Anastasi makes the claim that Ethnos is a KGB disinformation operation and that George Bobolas, the owner/publisher, is a Soviet agent of influence.

- Bobolas [redacted] subsequently sued Anastasi for libel. Anastasi was convicted in December 1983 and sentenced to two years in prison. According to the US Embassy, the Athens Court reportedly did not contest the veracity of evidence in the book but ruled that it was insufficient proof that Bobolas was an agent of the Soviets. In June 1984 the Court banned further sales of the book. 25X1
- In December 1984, the Supreme Court annulled Anastasi's sentence on procedural grounds, although it did not overturn the conviction.
- In a counter-suit, Bobolas and his editor, Alexander Filippopoulos, were charged with wire-tapping the telephones of the New York Times Bureau after publishing the transcript of a conversation between Anastasi and a lawyer friend. Bobolas admitted printing the conversation but claimed that the tapes had been mailed anonymously to the newspaper. The case is still pending. [redacted] 25X1

4. Although we have no "smoking gun" that would conclusively substantiate Anastasi's charges that Ethnos is a KGB operation and that its publisher is a Soviet agent of influence, the circumstantial evidence is impressive.

- Bobolas's contacts with the Soviets over a period of years are well-documented. In 1978 he signed a contract with the Soviets to publish a Greek-language edition of the Soviet encyclopedia. Other companies owned by Bobolas are also engaged in business dealings with the Soviets.
- The paper consistently adopts a pro-Soviet line. It has asserted, for example, that the Korean Airliner shot down by the Soviets in 1983 was on a CIA spy mission; that members of Poland's Solidarity work for the CIA; and that the US, not the Soviet Union, has used chemical weapons in Afghanistan.

[Redacted]

-- Articles from TASS, Novosti, and Pravda frequently appear in Ethnos.

-- The paper uses Western journalists with known Communist connections.

[Redacted] 25X1

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